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ABSTRACT

This collection of eight lesson plans deals with the Petersburg (Virginia) U.S. Civil War battlefield. The lessons tell about slave life and plantation life in the U.S. south, and how the Civil War forever changed this structure. To do the lessons, students read primary source documents that tell the stories of three different soldiers who participated in the siege of Petersburg: a Confederate soldier , a Union soldier, and a United States Colored Troops soldier. The lessons plans are divided into eight sections: (1) "A Slave, A Plantation, A War Pre-visit Lesson"; (2) "A Slave, A Plantation, A War Post-visit Lesson"; (3) "A City under Siege Pre-visit Lesson"; (4) "A City under Siege Post-visit Lesson"; (5) "Portrait of a Soldier Pre-visit Lesson"; (6) "Portrait of a Soldier Post-visit Lesson"; (7) "Prisoners of Petersburg Pre-visit Lesson"; and (8) "Prisoners of Petersburg Post-visit Lesson." Each lesson cites educational objectives, lists materials needed focuses on relevance and involvement of the learners, suggests transition and an explanation/activity, and offers closure. (BT)

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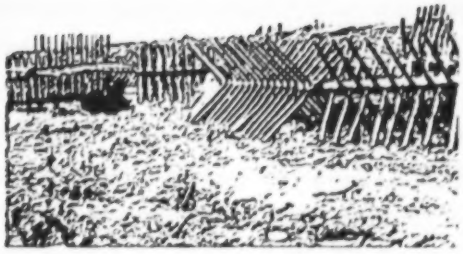
PARKS AS CLASSROOMS

Petersburg National Battlefield Lesson Plans



2001

Petersburg National Battlefield
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Petersburg National Battlefield
Lesson Plans

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These lessons tell about slave life and plantation life in the south, and how the Civil War forever changed this structure. Study the words of a slave at Appomattox Manor, Dr. Eppes, owner of this plantation in Hopewell, and General Ulysses S. Grant, who occupied this plantation during the Siege of Petersburg.

A City Under Siege – Pre-visit Lesson 11

A City Under Siege – Post-visit Lesson 14

Why was Petersburg a target for the Union army during the Civil War? Discover the "power of place" in these lesson plans, which focus on why people choose to settle in certain areas and the significance of transportation to the success of a city. Finally, discover the importance of supplying an army in the field, and how difficult it can be in the midst of a war.

Portrait of a Soldier – Pre-visit Lesson 19

Portrait of a Soldier – Post-visit Lesson 21

Students read primary source documents that tell stories of three different soldiers who participated in the siege of Petersburg. Confederate soldiers, Union Soldiers, and the United States Colored Troops who were a part of the Union army. While each of these men fought in the war for different reasons, they were all fighting for a way of life that they felt was just. This lesson explores where these men came from, why they fought, and what they were fighting for at Petersburg.

Prisoners of Petersburg - Pre-visit Lesson 26

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These lessons explore the daily life of a soldier. What was it like to be in the army during the Civil War? How did you eat? Where did you sleep? What did you wear? Soldiers tell you in their own words the difficulties of fighting in the Civil War and how they survived for nine-and-a-half months at Petersburg.

A Slave, A Plantation, A War

Pre-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, each student:

- Will describe the possible experiences of a slave, a plantation owner, and a war general through a look at the songs of the period.
- Will explain two hidden meanings in the songs.
- Will compare songs of the Civil War era to a song of today, and explain how the words reflect the culture.

Materials:

- Copies of the songs and music that will represent slaves, southern plantation owners and soldiers.

Relevance:

The field trip to City Point will provide a tour of the kitchen building, Appomattox Manor, and Grant's cabin. These three structures will be used to explain the life and experiences of a slave, a plantation owner, and a war general. Through the years, songs have been used as a medium to tell stories of peoples' lives and experiences. Just like songs today reflect the cuture of the people, songs of Civil War times also reflected the events and lifestyles of this time period. Students will look at songs from long ago and identify what stories they tell.

Involvment of the Learners:

Have students choose an appropriate, popular song of today and write a few of the lyrics on the board. Students can explain how the lyrics reflect the culture and events of today.

Example: Will Smith - Just The Two of Us
It's a full-time job to be a good dad
You got so much more stuff than I had
I gotta study just to keep with the changin times
101 Dalmations on your CD-ROM
See me--I'm trying to pretend I know
On my PC where that CD go
But yo, ain't nuthin promised, one day I'll be gone

Feel the strife but trust life does go on...
Album: Big Willie Style

Transition to Explanation:

How do the songs of today reflect the current events and lifestyles of our generation? What do the lyrics of the songs say about us and what type of families exist in the 1990s? Let's take a look at songs from another time.

Explanation/Activity:

- Students may work in pairs to read the lyrics of the song handouts. Handouts will represent the songs popularly sung by soldiers, slaves, or farmers.
- Students will need to identify whether the song would have been sung by a soldier, a slave, or a plantation owner. After the student pairs identify who would have sung this song, they must explain why the song reflects the lifestyle of the person they chose.
- Upon completing these questions, students will need to look for hidden meanings in the song. Students may pick one verse of the song and summarize what story the verse is telling.
- Students will share their songs with the class and explain their interpretation of the song. What does this song say about the events of the Civil War time period?

SONG LYRICS

A SLAVE,

One Slave's Perspective

We raise de wheat
Dey gib us de corn
We bake de bread
Dey gib us de cruss
We sif de meal
Dey gib us de huss
We peal de meat
Dey gib us de skin
And dat's de way
Dey takes us in

Frederick Douglass recorded this song indicative the slave's sense of planter's oppression.
Excerpt from: The Slave Community, John W. Blassingame

- What image does Douglass give the reader of slavery?
- Is slave life portrayed in a positive or negative light from this passage?
- Do you believe that all slaves felt this way about their circumstance in life?

A PLANTATION,

One Southern Perspective

Secession is our watchword,
Our rights we will demand;
To defend our homes and firesides
We pledge our hearts and hand.
Jeff Davis is our President,
With Stephen by our side;
Brave Beauregard, our General,
Will join in our ride.

Our wagon is the very best,
The running gear is good;
Stuffed 'round the sides with cotton,
And made of Southern wood.
Carolina is the driver,
With Georgia by her side,
Virginia holds the flag up,
While we all take a ride.

Wait for the Wagon was a popular song written by R.P. Buckley in the 1850s. A Southern Parody of this song became popular during the Civil War.
Singing Soldiers, A History of the Civil War in Song, Paul Glass, Louis C. Singer

- What does the word secession mean in these lyrics?
- Why might the lyrics refer to cotton and Southern wood?
- What is the opinion of the writer and singers of the words above? Do you believe that most southerners felt this way?
- Do the lyrics refer more to the issue of slavery or of states' rights?

A WAR

One Union Perspective

We're fighting for our Union, we're fighting for our trust,
We're fighting for that happy land where sleeps our Father's dust
It cannot be dissever'd, tho' it cost us bloody wars.
We can never give up the land where float the Stripes and Stars.

We do not want your cotton, we care not for your slaves,
But rather than divide this land, we'll fill your southern graves.
With Lincoln for our Chieftain, we'll wear our country's scars.
We rally round that brave old flag that bears the Strips and Stars!

The Bonnie Blue Flag, written by Harry Macarthy, became one of the most popular songs in the south during the Civil War. The success of the song in the South drew Col. J.L. Geddes to write a parody of this song, entitled "The Bonnie Blug Flag with Stripes and Stars." Singing Soldiers, A History of the Civil War in Song, Paul Glass, Louis C. Singer

- What are the reasons for fighting the Civil War according to the lyrics of this song?
- What is the opinion of this writer or singer of the south?
- Do you believe that all northerner felt this way about slavery?

Closure

- Pass out a copy of the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd."
  While songs are often an expression of the lifestyle of a people during a certain time and place, some songs truly have hidden messages. Songs of the slaves were often sung to communicate certain messages to one another. The song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" was often sung by slaves who worked on the Underground Railroad. Read the lyrics of the song, and see if you can identify what the possible hidden messages are in the words.

Follow the Drinkin' Gourd
Follow the Drinkin' Gourd
For the old man's waitin' for to carry you to freedom,
If you follow the Drinkin' Gourd.
When the sun comes back and the first quail calls,
Follow the Drinkin' Gourd
For the old man's waitin' for to carry you to freedom,
If you follow the Drinkin' Gourd.

- What the lyrics could have meant:
  "When the sun comes back" - Sunset
  "And the first quail calls" - Bird sound
  "Follow the Drinking Gourd" - Go north, following the Big Dipper located near the North Star

A Slave, A Plantation, A War

Post-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, each student:

- Will compare the words of a slave, a plantation owner, and a war general to those reflected in the song lyrics of the previous activity.
- Will explain how songs can reflect inaccurate viewpoints of the Civil War and provide at least two viewpoints of slavery, plantation life, and the Civil War.
- Will explain how the lives of the people on this plantation changed at the war's end.

Materials:

- Diary excerpts, letters, and other primary source documents containing the words and viewpoints of a slave, a plantation owner, and a Union war general.

Relevance:

Following the field trip to City Point, students will have a greater understanding and visual perception of how one slave, one plantation owner, and one war general lived before and during the war. Students will be familiar with the experiences of Paulina Eppes, Dr. Richard Eppes, and General Grant following this field experience. They will compare the experiences these individuals had before and during the war to the opinions expressed in the lyrics of the songs. While songs reflect general feelings of a culture, they cannot express the opinions of a whole group of people.

Involvment of the Learners:

Open the activity by reading the following document:

Song Entitled: We are coming from the cotton fields

We are coming from the cotton fields
We are coming from afar;
We have left the plow, the hoe, the axe
And are going to the war;

We have left the old plantation seat
The sugar and the cane

Where we worked and toil'd with weary feet,
In sun and wind and rain.

Words: J.C. ---n; music: J.C. Wallace; pub.; Root & Cady, Chicago, 1864
The Civil War Songbook, Richard Crawford

Transition to Explanation:

How does this document portray the life of a slave? What are the truths of the song lyrics? What are the misconceptions of the song lyrics? Now, how do the words of the following people fit into your own ideas of slave life, plantation life, and the reasons for the Civil War?

Explanation/Activity:

- Students will work in small groups to create a web or a list of characteristics of a slave, a plantation owner, and a Union Soldier.
- Students may work in pairs to read the primary source documents of a slave, a plantation owner, and a war general.
- Upon reading these documents, students will summarize the basic feelings of this particular slave, plantation owner, and war general. Student will then compare the words of these three people to the opinion list they have formed. Do the two documents match or are there some differences?
- Students will discuss the differences they have found in their perceptions of slave life, plantation life, and soldier life and those espoused by the examples.

Words of Slaves

"Yes, Tom Hatcher was very kind to his slaves an' didn't 'low dem to be too severely punished. Yes, sometimes slaves would run away an' take refuge on Tom Hatcher's place an' he was very kin' to 'em an' didn't return 'em to dey masters. Yes, he protect dem 'til he foun' out where dey came f'om an'de circumstances o'de leavin.' Well, yes, his 'state was said to be a refuge fer slaves when dey run away f'om dey cruel masters."

Mrs. Patience M. Avery
215 Kentucky Ave., Petersburg, VA
Interviewed March 19, 1937

"I was born January 9, 1849 on the James at a place called Epps Island, City Point. I was born a slave. How old am I! Well, there's the date. Count it up for yourself. My owner's name was Dr. Richard B. Epps. I stayed there until I was around thirteen or fourteen years old when I came to Hampton.

I don't know much about the meanness of slavery. There was so many degrees in slavery, and I belonged to a very nice man. He never sold but one man, fur's I can remember, and

that was cousin Ben. Sold him South. Yes. My master was a nice old man. He ain't living now. Dr. Epps died and his son wrote me my age. I got it upstairs in a letter now."

Richard Slaughter (b. 1849), Interviewed December 27, 1936

"Weevils in the Wheat, Interviews with Virgini Ex-Slaves"
Compiled and edited by Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips

Word of a Plantation Owner

"John Corn applied today for permission to marry a woman named Celia belonging to Mr Hill Carter, could not give my consent but told him I would sell him to Mr Carter or a neighbor if he desired to marry the woman as I did not wish to separate families it being a rule of the plantation which though bearing hard on individual cases I regard as absolutely essential to the general good."

Sunday, December 4th 1859
The Diary of Richard Eppes

"Today should truly be marked with a black as old Horace would say, being one of the most unpleasant I have spent in many days. To sum up its events, as soon as I had finished my breakfast, the negro being assembled in the washroom, I read the law of leaving the plantation without my permission to Henry Corson, the others being present and administered to him 15 lashes this having been the third time he has done the same thing each time previous having been warned. The taking away of our boats, the stealing of our oars and the absence of the negros at night from their houses has become intolerable and finding that talking and threatening had no effect I was resolved to put a stop to it by administering in full effect our plantation laws."

Friday, September 2, 1859
The Diary of Richard Eppes

..."My neighbor Mr James Proctor called & spent the evening, he brought with him a paper to obtain signatures to instruct our delegate, Mr Timothy Rives, in the State Convention to vote for an ordinance of Secession for the State of Virginia which I signed having lost all hopes of our Union with the Northern States since President Lincoln has adopted the policy of Coercion of the seceeded states. This step is perhaps the most important of my life but as the question is now narrowed down to the bare option of my State taking sides with or against the South, both my feelings and interest induce me to give my individual vote for the South, though could our rights have been fully guaranteed in the old Union of the States North & South I should have much preferred it to new combinations attended as it may with civil war & general confusion for months perhaps year."

Monday, April 15th, 1861
The Diary of Richard Eppes

Words of a War General

Letter written by General U.S. Grant to Robert E. Lee
Cold Harbor, VA., June 5, 1864

"It is reported to me that there are wounded men, probably of both armies, now lying exposed and suffering between the lines occupied respectively by the two armies. Humanity would dictate that some provision should be made to provide against such hardships. I would propose, therefore, that hereafter, when no battle is raging, either party be authorized to send to any point between the pickets or skirmish lines, unarmed men bearing litters to pick up their dead or wounded, without being fired upon by the other party..."

"As soon as Warren was fortified and reinforcements reached him, troops were sent south to destroy the bridges on the Weldon Railroad; and with such success that the enemy had to draw in wagons, for a distance of about thirty miles, all the supplies they got thereafter from that source..."

Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant

Closure:

Question for thought: If you grew up as a slave at City Point and saw the Civil War end, how would you feel when you were told you were free?

Read the following excerpt from Arthur Greene, a slave from Petersburg Virginia:

"You know after de surrender us colored people didn' have no whar to go but on de road. Folks jes' stayed on wid dair masters an' mistress cause dey had no whar to go. Pitiful! Pitiful! Pitiful times an' discument we was in. Now while you stay on de plantation you had to do as dem ole white folks said; if you didn' you had to git off. See we was bound to eat so fer a while we took anything 'till we straightened ourselves out..."

"Weevils in the Wheat, Interviews with Virgini Ex-Slaves"
Compiled and edited by Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips

A City Under Siege

Pre-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, each student:

- Will list three characteristics of an area where people would settle.
- Will explain how the landscape has been a significant factor to the success of a city.
- Will explain the significance of transportation in the success of industry.
- Will identify two successful industries of a southern city in 1860.

Materials:

- Copies of the unmarked maps of Petersburg with focus questions.
- Pencil and paper

Relevance:

The power of place has played a large role in determining the course of American history. Settlers who traveled miles and miles over water and land for a new beginning probably did not randomly select where to land their boats or carriages to make their new homes. They looked for certain characteristics of the land where they settled.

Involvement of the Learners:

What are some questions you would have for your parents, if they announced that the family was moving to a new city?

Transition to Explanation:

Now, imagine that you have no telephones, no cars, and no electricity. What would you look for in a place to make your home?

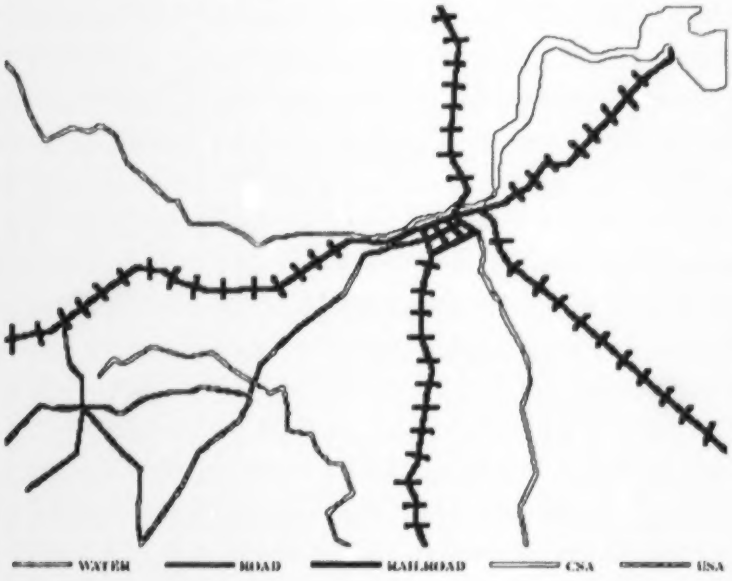
Explantion/Activity

- Pass out pieces of white paper. Instruct students to draw a picture of a place where they would make their home, if they were moving to a new state or territory in 1860?
- Write a brief paragraph to accompany your drawing. Explain what you would look for in a city or state and why.

- Pass out the blank maps of Petersburg in 1861. Do not tell students what city is represented in the map. Students will read the scenario of this city, answer the focus questions about this place, and finally decide if he or she would choose to live there.

Scenario of the Unknown City

When the war began in 1861, this city was a growing city filled with fine houses, busy shops, and successful factories. The city's 18,000 residents were proud of this prosperous town, which was a trading center with local and world markets. Farmers would bring their crops from the surrounding countryside to this city. Town merchants were successful from the traffic that came in and out of the city. By 1860, this city had become the third largest city in the state and one of the most important.



- Why was this city so successful, according to the map?
- Why would people from the surrounding countryside bring their goods into the city?
- How did these travelers help the economy of the city? (Hint: Think of the local merchants)
- If you were new to a state, is this a city where you would choose to live? Why or why not?

Closure:

Provide clues to the students about what city is represented by the map.

- This was city in the state of Virginia.

- This city was home to tobacco manufacturing companies, cotton and flour mills, and iron works industries.
- This city was located 23 miles south of the Capitol of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Answer: Petersburg, VA
Question for thought: Why were the citizens of Petersburg worried that it might become a target for the Union army during the Civil War?

A City Under Siege

Post-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, each student:

- Will identify three reasons why Petersburg was a target for the Union army during the Civil War.
- Will explain how soldiers from both the Union and the Confederate army acquired supplies during the siege of Petersburg.
- Will describe Grant's strategy to defeat the southern army at Petersburg when a direct attack failed.

Materials:

- Copies of the maps of Petersburg with focus questions.
- Pencil

Relevance:

The siege of Petersburg is not always remembered in the textbooks of American history. Yet, Petersburg saw ten months of fighting during the last year of the Civil War. Grant expected that the Union army would capture Petersburg in a direct attack. When this failed, Grant's strategy switched to an attack on the supply lines. This endeavor would take much longer than Grant expected.

Involvement of the Learners:

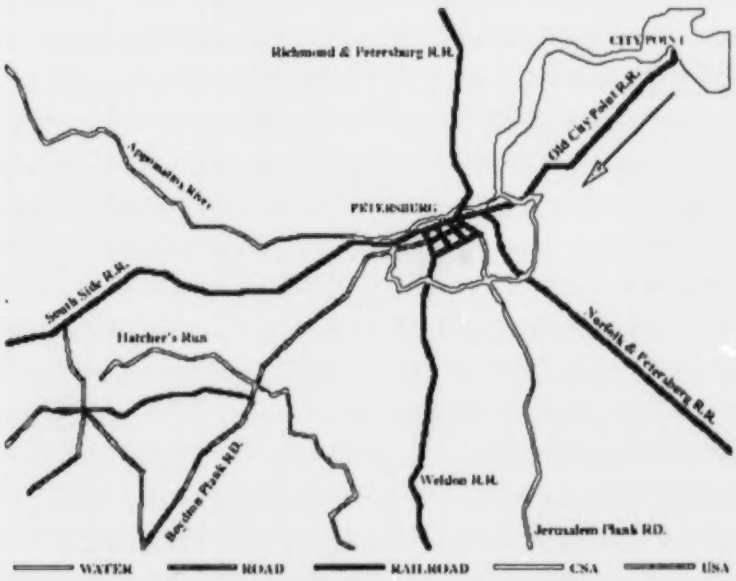
- Read the following excerpt to the students.

Grant's words following the initial attack on Petersburg, June 15th-18th
"I now ordered the troops to be put under cover and allowed some of the rest which they had so long needed. They remained quiet, except that there was more or less firing every day, until the 22nd, when General Meade ordered an advance towards the Weldon Railroad. We were very anxious to get that road, and even round to the South Side Railroad if possible." Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant

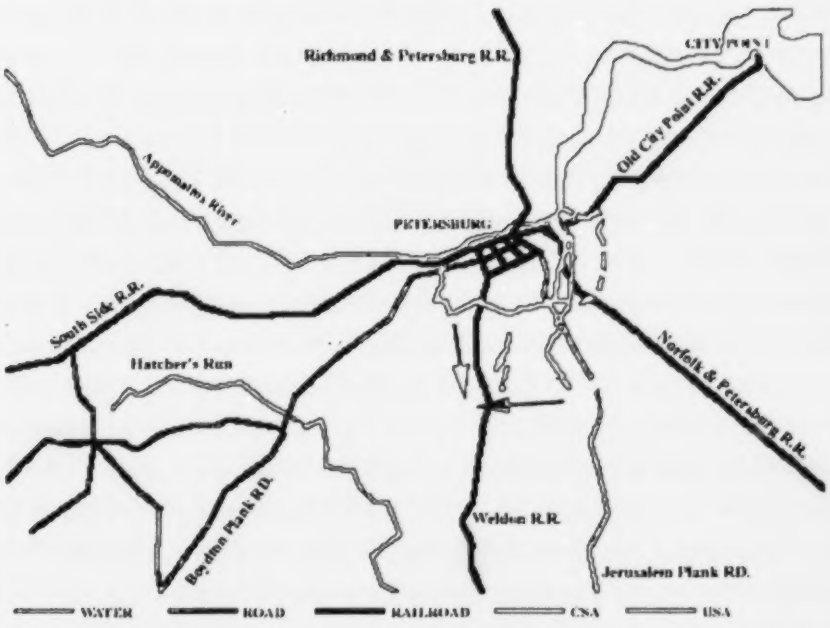
Explantion/Activity

- Study the maps to figure out Grant's strategy at Petersburg. Follow the troop movements on the maps in the order that they appear, and write a brief description of where the Union troops are attacking.
- Answer the focus questions following each map.
- Select a headline and write an article for a local newspaper about the siege of Petersburg.

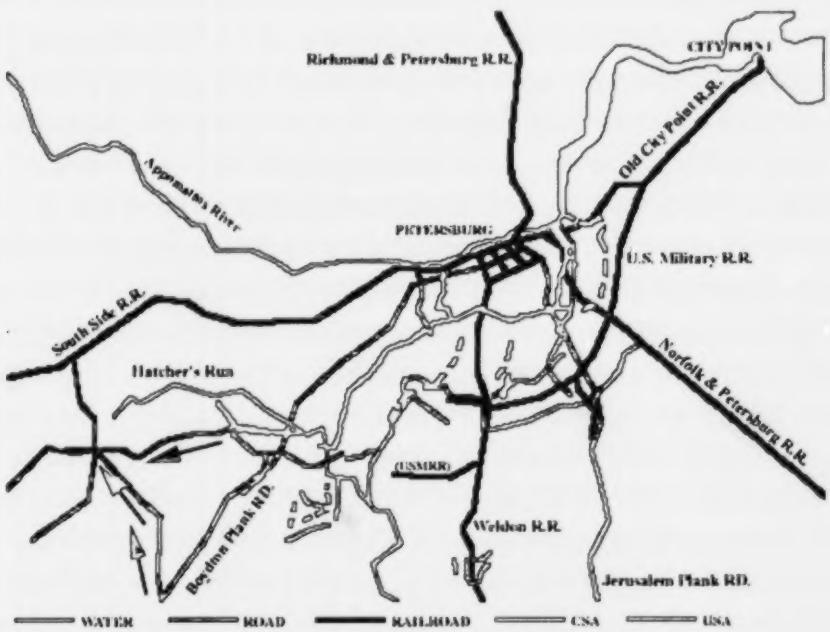
Map #1



Map #2


Richmond & Petersburg R.R.
CITY POINT
Old City Point R.R.
Appomattox River
PETERSBURG
South Side R.R.
Hatcher's Run
Norfolk & Petersburg R.R.
Weldon R.R.
Boydton Plank RD.
Jerusalem Plank RD.
WATER
ROAD
RAILROAD
CSA
USA

Map #3


Richmond & Petersburg R.R.
CITY POINT
Old City Point R.R.
Appomattox River
PETERSBURG
U.S. Military R.R.
South Side R.R.
Hatcher's Run
Norfolk & Petersburg R.R.
(USMRR)
Weldon R.R.
Boydton Plank RD.
Jerusalem Plank RD.
WATER
ROAD
RAILROAD
CSA
USA

Activity One: Focus questions for the Maps

Map #1: Opening Attack on Petersburg

- Why did the Confederate army build fortifications around the city of Petersburg in 1862, two years before the fighting ever arrived here? Why did Petersburg need to be protected?

- Why did General Grant and the Union army choose City Point as the location for their headquarters during the siege? What were the advantages of being at City Point?

Map #2: Battle of the Weldon Railroad

- When the Union army failed to take Petersburg during the initial attack, why did they want to capture the Weldon Railroad?

- What two railroad lines were in Union hands after the initial attack?

- Why did the strategy of the Union army shift to a focus on the railroad lines around Petersburg? What was significant about these railroads for the Confederate army?

Map #3: Battle of Five Forks

- At this point in the war, the Union army had possession of the City Point Railroad, the Norfolk and Petersburg line, and portions of the Weldon Railroad. What was Grant's target in the Battle of Five Forks?

- The Union army succeeded in breaking through the Boydton Plank Road, a major roadway west of the city. The success of the Union army at Five Forks opened the door to the Union army to take the Southside Railroad. Why did this mean the end for the Confederate army?

- After studying the maps, what do you believe is the goal of a military siege? Was it a success at Petersburg?

Activity Two: Become a reporter

- Select a headline, and write a front page article for a local paper. Big stories make the front page, so use your imagination!

Headlines

Confederate Soldiers Dig In...Worry that Petersburg May Be Attacked!

General Grant Fools Lee...Surprise Attack on Petersburg!

Petersburg Under Siege!

Attack on the Weldon Railroad...Union Soldiers Hit 'Em Where It Hurts:
In The Stomach!

It's Supply or Die for the Confederate Army!

Five Forks Falls...The End is Near!

Closure:

Read the following quote from the Reminiscences of General Robert E. Lee,
Rev. J. William Jones, D.D.

"We must destroy this army of Grant's before he gets to the James River. If he gets there, it will become a siege, and then it will be a mere question of time."

These prophetic words were spoken by Confederate General Robert E. Lee, prior to the siege. Why did Lee worry that the Confederate army would be in trouble, if Grant got south of the James? How did he know what would happen?

Portrait of a Soldier

Pre-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, each student:

- Will identify three different participants in the Civil War.
- Will draw a picture illustrating the type of home life this Civil War soldier may have come from before he entered the war.
- Will write an editorial to a local paper explaining why each of these three participants wanted to fight in the war.
- Will find justification for the reasons the soldiers were fighting in the war in the words of the Declaration of Independence.

Materials:

- Pencil and white paper for sketching pictures
- Copies of the Declaration of Independence

Relevance:

In the early years of the Civil War, volunteers from both the North and South joined the armies to fight for the rights and beliefs of their territories. Many northern soldiers were fighting to hold the Union together. Many southern soldiers were fighting for states rights. While slavery was a significant sectional difference, the issue of emancipation for the slaves became more prominent in the later years of the war.

- Where did these soldiers come from?
- What were there lives like before the war?
- What motivated them to keep fighting even as the war dragged on, evident in the nine-and-a-half months of fighting at Petersburg?

Involvement of the Learners:

- Ask the students: "Who was fighting in the Civil War?
Some students may answer northern and southern soldiers, or Union and Confederate soldiers right away, but who was another important participant in the war?
(Hint: Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation gave new cause to this group of people.)
Answer: The African American soldiers were known as the United States Colored Troops
The participation of the United States Colored Troops was prominent in the siege of

Petersburg. While this term is not used today, in 1864 a United States Colored Troop (USCT) was a brave and honorable position for an African American.

Transition to Explanation:

Show the students a picture of a farm, a plantation, or a factory. Ask the students who would have lived in this area: A Confederate soldier, a white Union soldier, or an African American Soldier? Why?

Explantion/Activity

- Students will draw pictures of where Union, Confederate, and United States Colored Troops may have lived before they joined the army. Encourage students to draw pictures that clearly reflect the lifestyle of these three groups of people, as they imagine them to be.

- Have volunteers share their picture with the class and discuss the lifestyle of a particular soldier before the war. A discussion of the pictures will help students understand the sectional differences still developing in the country in the 1850s and early 1860s.

- Following the discussion, students will a brief editorial to a local newspaper in 1861, pretending that they are a southern farmer, a slave working on a plantation, or a factory worker from the north. In this editorial, the student will explain why he/she is willing to fight for his way of life if a civil war should begin.

Closure:

At this point in the lesson, students should have definitive reasons why the soldiers wanted to fight in the Civil War. Have students follow along as the instructor reads the opening paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.

- What do these words mean to a Confederate Soldier? A Union Soldier? A United States Colored Troop fighting in the Union Army?

Portrait of a Soldier

Post-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, each student:

- Will identify three different participants in the Battle of the Crater.
- Will list two similarities and two differences in the accounts of a Confederate soldier, a Union soldier, and a United States Colored Troop in the Battle of the Crater.
- Will select the identity of a Confederate Soldier, Union Soldier, or a United States Colored Troop and compose a letter for a future classroom of students.

Materials:

- Handouts of soldier letters
- Pencil and paper

Relevance:

Students will have a greater understanding of the horrible fighting that took place during the Civil War, focusing specifically on the tragedy of the Battle of the Crater. After three-and-a-half years of fighting, many soldiers were weary of the war and simply wanted to be home. Many of the United States Colored Troops were eager and ready to fight. Either way, most soldiers continued to fight for their homelands and the causes that brought them to Petersburg. Whether right or wrong, soldiers fought to protect their way of life.

Involvement of the Learners:

- Do you believe the United States would be the same today if the Civil War never took place?

- Do you think the United States is a stronger country todaybecause of the Civil War?

Transition to Explanation:

Read the excerpt about June 18th, The Opening Attack on Petersburg:

"The ditch was now full of men, and we began to climb up the face of the parapet. A man would run his bayonet into the side of the parapet, and another would use it as a step-ladder to climb up. As we were thus ascending I was wondering why the Johnnies

(referring to Confederate soldiers) behind the parapet were so quiet. It was now getting quite dark, and I felt sure that as fast as a "colored troop" would put his head above the level of the parapet it would be shot off, or he would be knocked back into the ditch; and I fully expected the Sixth U.S. Colored Troops, officers and all, to find their death in that ditch. But they didn't. Not a bit of it. We climbed into the fort or battery only to find it empty. The last Confederate was gone, save one, a fair haired boy of 17 or 18 years, dead. He was a handsome boy, with long, fair hair, looking as though he had been tenderly reared. Perhaps only a few days before he had been attending school in Petersburgh, and had just come out now to help man the defenses of the city. We buried him as well as we could and though an hour before I would have met him as an enemy, now I helped to bury him as tenderly as though he had been a Union soldier."

John McMurray, Major 6th U.S.C.T.
Recollections of a Colored Troop

Explantion/Activity

- Students may work individually or in small groups. They will read the letters of the soldiers who participated in the Crater. Students will need to identify whether the author of the letter was a Confederate soldier, a Union Soldier, or a United States Colored Troop.

- Students will list two similarities and two differences in the three accounts of the soldiers who participated in the Battle of the Crater. The instructor can lead the students in a discussion of how these accounts differed.

- Students will then choose or be assigned a particular position in the war. They will write a letter from the viewpoint of a Confederate soldier, a Union soldier, or a United States Colored Troop about what they saw and experienced during the Battle of the Crater, and why they were risking their lives in the war. Students should pull from the pre-visit lesson activities, the field experience, and the letters they have just read. The letters should be written in first person.

Soldier Letters

Letter from William Pegram to Jenny Pegram
1 August 1864
Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Collection

"I suppose you all have gotten, before this, a correct account of the affairs on Saturday. It was an exceedingly brilliant one for us. The enemy avoided our mine & ran theirs under Cousin Dick's Battery. They blew it up about daylight, & taking advantage of the temporary confusion & demoralization of our troops at that point, rushed a large body of whites & blacks into the breach. This turned out much worse for them in the end. The ever ready Mahone was carried down to retake the line with his fine troops, which he did, with comparatively small loss to himself, & great loss to the enemey. I never saw such a sight as I saw on that portion of the line for a good distance in the trenches, the yankees, white & black principally the latter, were piled two or three or four deep. A few of our men were wounded by the negroes, which exasperated them very much..."

Letter from a Maine Soldier
Camp near Petersburg, VA., July 31st, 1864
Petersburg Files, Source Unknown

"We had the saddest day yesterday I ever saw. We were called up at half past two o'clock, A.M., and formed in a line of battle at three. We filed our left in front and marched down to within three hundred yards of the rebel fort we had mined, and halted in a deep railroad cut until the explosion took place, which was terriffic. There was six tons of powder buried thirty feet under ground, directly under the fort, which exploded at half past four A.M., when we started for the rebels and went directly into the remains of the fort. At the moment the fort blew up we had fifty pieces of artillery open on them directly over us. The air was so thick that I could not see three feet ahead. The ruins of the fort I cannot describe; my heart sickens at the thought. The huge masses of earth, thrown almost to the way from six to ten rods, were thrown almost to our lines, or from the fort twenty or thirty rods; and many of them were burried alive, cannon and gun-carriages thrown in all directions, together with the same. Inside, where those two regiments met their fate, baffles description."

Lieutenant J.J. Scroggs
5th U.S.C.T., 3rd Brigade, 3rd Division
J.J. Scrogg's Diary and Letters 1852-1862
compiled by Larry Leigh

"...The signal for their advance was to be the explosion of a mine under a rebel fort in their front. 3 o'clock came but no explosion. 4 and still nothing but the stillness of death which was really oppressive. The suspense was fearful and some were already predicting the failure of the great mine when the smothered roar of an earthquake and a power which shook the earth for miles around the mighty giant broke through the imprisoning walls lifting the rebel fort, guns and garrison high in the air. Hardly had the tremendous

explosion taken place when it was succeeded by another and more terrible roar burst with an awful crash from the iron throats of one hundred pieces of artillery. For one hour without cessation or interval the iron storm raged over our heads, the screaming hurtling misiles suggesting that ten thousand devils were holding high carnival in mid air, or forty thousand juvenile hogs had attempted a passage through a fence and stuck..."

Closure:

- Why was the Battle of the Crater a loss for the Union army?
- Why was the Batte of the Crater a success for the Confederate army?
- Despite the Union loss at the Crater, why was this a significant battle for the United States Colored Troops?

Prisoners of Petersburg

Pre-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, each student:

- Will identify whether a soldier was in camp, on the march, or in the trenches according to his words.
- Will describe two differences and two similarities in a soldier's lifestyle when he is on the march, in camp, and in the trenches.
- Will explain two hardships of being a soldier in the Civil War.

Materials:

- Excerpts of letters and diaries of actual soldiers who participated in the siege of Petersburg.
- Paper and Pencil

Relevance:

Civil War soldiers endured many hardships during the Civil War. While soldiers saw a fair amount of fighting during the four years of the war, the majority of their time was spent marching from one place to another or in camp. How did soldiers live? What did they do on a daily basis, when battles were not being fought? How did they keep a positive spirit in the face of a war that would not end?

Involvement of the Learners:

Read the following excerpt from a soldier's diary:
"Camp life here is very hard, the weather being very hot, and we drill a great deal. In the morning at 5 o'clock we are awakened by the reveille; get up and answer roll call; then form for squad drill; then breakfast, after which is company drill; come in and rest for awhile, and then the whole regiment goes out for a batallion drill; next dinner; next brigade drill; next division drill, and we all think if the fields were only large enough, we would have a corps and army drill."
Daniel G. Crotty, Third Michigan Volunteer Infantry

Transition to Explanation: After reading this excerpt, do you think it would be easier to be in camp or on the march? Why?

Explantion/Activity

- Students will read the six brief excerpts of soldier life. Students will then identify whether the soldier was on the march, in camp, or in the trenches according to the passage.

- Students will write and discuss two major differences and two similarities in a soldier's life when he is on the march, in camp, or in the trenches.

- Students will write editorials for a local paper about soldier life. They will select a position (camp life, marching, or the trenches) and write an editorial about the merits of one of these position. They will need to support their position by using the information they have just read.

Excerpts for lesson:

"We travelled very slowly, with constant stops and then a few yards gained. Everyone was very sleepy, the heat of the previous day seeming to have taken all the vigour out of man and beast. My own men kept up, for unless with their battery they have no chance for any breakfast; but after every little halt more or less of the infantry were left asleep on the roadside. The provost guard which was immediately in my front could do but very little towards getting the stragglers along. Take it altogether, I do not remember ever to have seen such an amount of sleepiness on the part of both officers and men."
Colonel Charles S. Wainwright

"After dinner we marched until 10 o'clock at night, when we formed in line connecting with the 5th Corps, which is planted squarely across the Danville Railroad. After fooling around a couple of hours, we lay down for the rest of night. This was a moment of supreme enjoyment for the writer -- and one of wretchedness as well. Was ever a mortal permitted to endure such tortures as I have suffered today? Quite early in the day my heels were galled to the bone. The blood dried into my stockings and boots, and when I removed them, the flesh was actually torn from my heel. I thought I had known suffereing from this cause before, but all previous experiences have been simply skirmishes compared with the agony of the moment."
Maine Volunteer

"...All is quiet now except the usual canonadeing and sharpshooting. For two days we have had no skirmishing on our line here. The Yanks agreed to quit if our boys were willing and they readily consented and again are at liberty to walk near the line. The most of them are busily engaged preparing for the winter, which is fast approaching here. Instead of building huts as formerly, they dig a hole in the ground about 6 feet deep and 10 feet square, put over the top a layer of large logs. On that a layer of boughs and leaves, and cover the whole with dirt which they pile on till it is shaped like a potatoe hill."
Marion Hill Fitzpatrick, Army of Northen Virginia

We have an old tent stretched in camp, but it leaks badly; still it is some protection and we should be thankful. We are getting on very well in the way of rations, both for man and horse and if we could be only be quiet here for a month, the horses would improve much. General H., I understand, says this campaign has been the most active by far of any previous one in this state and I think he might have added that the victories of the Confederates have been more decisive."
General William Stokes, 4th South Carolina Cavalry

"Well this is the 22nd day of our operations before Petersburg. It's 3 days in the trenches and two out, with us, and the out is not much better than the in for we do not move so far to the rear but that the rebs can shell us. I am just as thin as a rail (just the condition for this country) yet in good health and strong as I ever was. I will not be so liable to fevers, or to fatal results severely wounded as if I was fleshy, so that I am very well satisfied with my physical condition. You would be certainly diverted to see me now. I occupy a hold in the ground just long enough for one to lie down in and high enough to set up in, covered with poles and two or three feet of earth to form a protection from pieces of shell. I cannot see that we are gaining much advantage but I suppose Mr. Grant knows what he is about."

J.J. Scroggs, 5th U.S.C.T.

"...I have before stated that my camp was back of old Blanford church, dug into the slope of the hill. From the camp to the church was an open, closely grazed field called the "common," sloping down towards the camp...My fly was pitched in a dugout about ten feet wide dug back into the hill to a perpendicular wall about eight feet high...One night a working party was to be sent out to start a mine in an exposed place and the officers who were to go with it, four or five in number, were sitting around a table in my tent, examining a plan of the work I had made and was explaining to them. We were all intently engaged on this when we hear approaching through the still night air what sounded like a railroad express train. We all knew what it was. It was the long-expected three-hundred-pounder; but no one spoke, all pretending unawareness, and I went on with my explanation... Presently the sound came from right over our heads, apparently, and increased to a terrific roar, becoming louder and louder every second and I was sure it was going to fall right on my table. In spite of all I could do I felt my hand on the plan in which I held my pencil begin to shake..."
W.W. Blackford. C.S.A.

Closure:

It was not always easy to be a soldier whether you were on the march, in camp, or in the trenches. Many soldiers simply wanted to be home as the siege dragged into months.

- Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Prisoners of Petersburg

Post-visit Lesson

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, each student:

- Will view photographs of the trenches where the soldiers ate, slept, and fought; and explain how a soldier's life in the trenches at Petersburg differed from normal camp life in the Civil War.
- Will describe how the trench warfare the soldiers experienced at Petersburg contributed to the lengthy nine-and-a-half-month siege.
- Will provide two reasons why soldiers from both the Union and the Confederate armies might be prisoners of the city.
- Will create a cartoon editorial about soldier life in the trenches, with the theme "Prisoners of Petersburg."

Materials:

- Pictures of the trenches where soldiers lived.
- Political or editorial cartoon examples
- Paper and pencil

Relevance:

Soldier life was certainly difficult during the Civil War. Often, soldiers dined on hardtack, coffee, and salt pork, slept on the ground, and entertained the constant noise of cannon shells and minnieballs around them. So what was different about the siege of Petersburg? Fighting in the open field and camp life as they knew it, would change drastically for the soldiers who found themselves in the trenches of Petersburg with no quick victory in sight.

Involvement of the Learners:

A soldier's feelings about the surrender
"It was not easy to adjust to the new order of things. All that we have suffered and fought for and almost died for, at last consumated. Three years of suspense and horror were broken down in less than three minutes. Had every man in this army been sentenced to death and now suddenly pardoned, I imagine the effect would be similar."

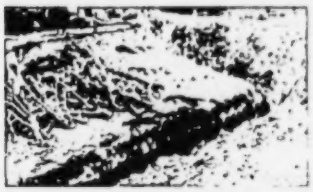
Civil War Journal of a Maine Volunteer
The Rebel Yell & the Yankee Hurrah

Transition to Explanation:

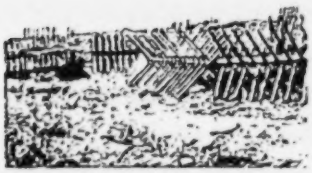
After reading these words, do you think the soldiers who participated in the siege were "Prisoners of Petersburg"?

Explanation/Activity

- Provide the students with photos of the trenches and fortifications where the soldiers lived. Students will complete questions about how soldier life was different at Petersburg.



- Many soldiers would use abatis (felled trees) to further protect them in the trenches? Why would soldiers cut down trees and place them in front of their trenches?



- Soldiers also used chevaux-de-frise to protect their earthworks. These structures were made by sharpening the ends of trees and connecting them together to form a defense system. How would chevaux-de-frise protect the soldiers behind the trenches? Do you think they were an effective defense?

- While soldiers would often sleep under the stars, canvas shelter halfs and tent flies were used to create a shelter from the weather. How have these soldiers used their shelters inside the trenches? Do you think this photograph represents a temporary or a more permanent camp? Explain.

- Soldiers from both armies spent much of their time behind walls such as these. When a battle was not raging and shots were not being fired, what would the soldiers do behind these earthen walls to pass the time? Do you think that they could move freely behind these walls?

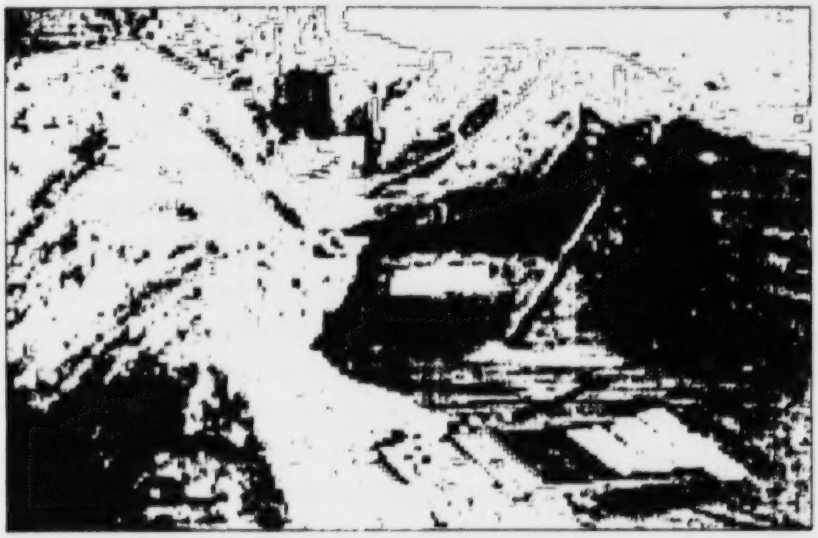
- Soldiers took advantage of the landscape around them, when they constructed their fortifications. What did they use to build these trenches? After viewing these photographs, and the amount of wood it took to create these trenches, how do you imagine the landscape around them looked after nine-and-a-half months of the siege?

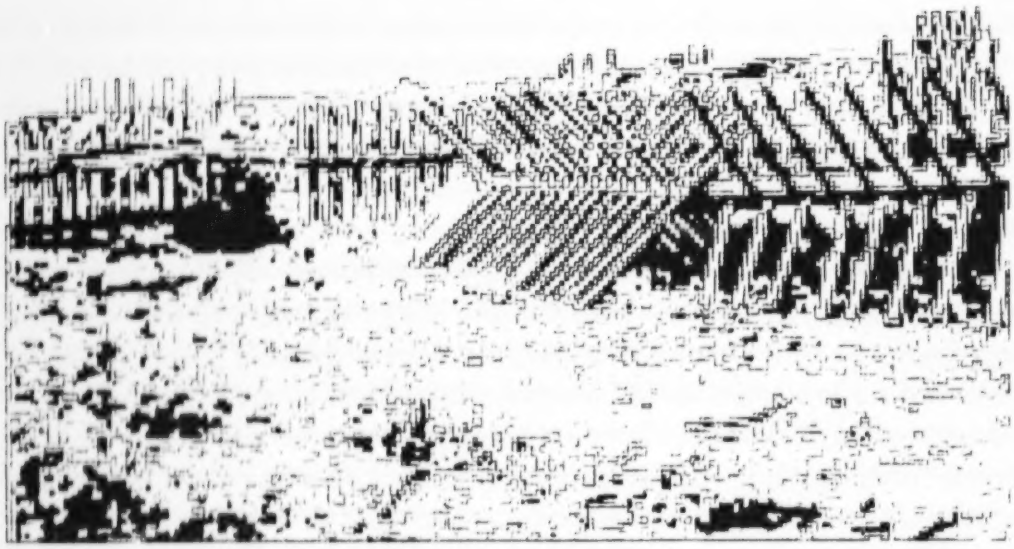
- Students will use these photographs to discuss why the soldiers might have been called "Prisoners of Petersburg." The class can discuss how the soldiers lived, where they lived, and finally, why fighiting in the trenches may have drawn out the length of the siege.

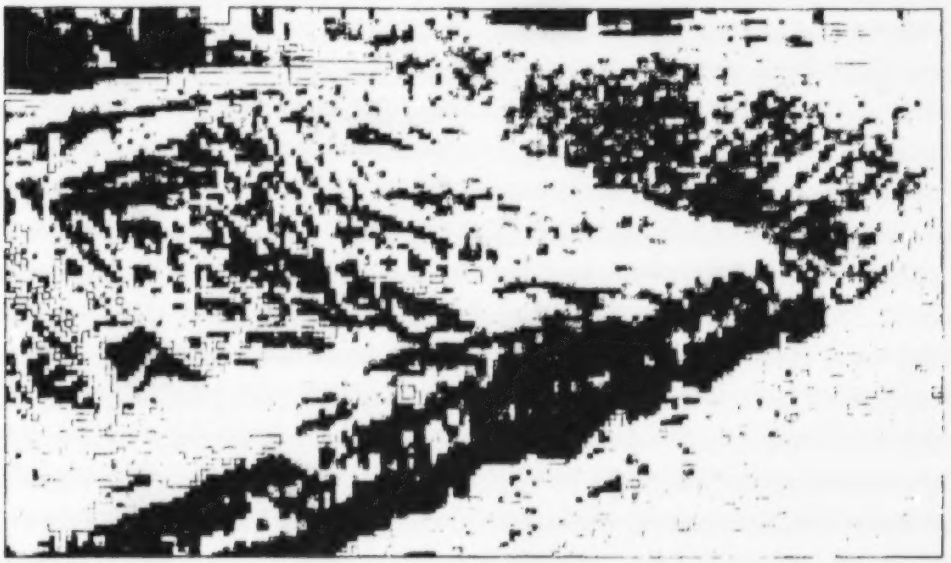
- Students will receive drawing paper. They will be asked to create a cartoon illustrating soldier life in the trenches of Petersburg. The theme for their drawing will be "Prisoners of Petersburg." Encourage students to be creative in their drawings, providing a strong viewpoint of trench life. Their cartoon can be serious or comical in nature.

Closure:

Collect the cartoons from the students and pass them out randomly to each student. Have the students study another's cartoon, and figure out what type of message the cartoonist is trying to give the audience.







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